2: Howell M-5 (ca 1908) 1908-1910
OC6 Iban OC6

THE SEA DYAK.

By The Revd. Wm. Howell.

174 The Sea Dyaks belong to the Malayan race. It is a fact unquestionable. Neither the Sea Dyaks nor the Malays in Sarawak could be termed the aborigines of the Island of Borneo. To satisfactorily trace anything as to their origin requires greater knowledge than I possess. It is the study of their language and that of the Malays that has led me to the conclusion that the Dyaks and Malays are akin.

The Sea Dyaks, it appears, migrated into this part of the Island of Borneo long before the Malays. It may be surmised that the causes of their migration were the compulsory conversion of Mohamed's successors, famine, or tribal wars. It is with them a natural habit to be always removing from one place to another. Their methods of farming and building of houses almost always compel them to live a wandering life. If there be lawsuits or disputes with regard to the ownership of land, the losing party will undoubtedly remove.

101 The meaning of the word Dyak is difficult to elucidate. Some say that it is a corruption of the word *darat* which means "inland" or "up country;" others say that the word is adopted from the Land Dyak word *daya*, which means "the people," and is equivalent to the Malay word *orang*. The derivation of the word Dyak is therefore an open question.

101 There is as yet no light thrown upon the matter
174 which will lead us to any satisfactory conclusion with reference to their nationality. The word *Daya* which is a word meaning either inland, or up country, or the people, gives us no assistance whatever towards the discovery of their nationality. But from studying their peculiarities and habits, it gives us just a chance to surmise without the aid of their traditions that they once had a name to express their nationality, but from what cause or reason their forefathers allowed it to die out in such a mysterious manner is better answered by my readers. The presumption that may be taken is this, that the peculiarity of the Sea Dyaks up to the present day is to call themselves by the name of the place or river they remove to or dwell in.

2: Howell M-5 (ca. 1908) 1908-1910
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No. II. **THE SEA DYAK RELIGION.**

By the Revd. Wm. Howell.

771 The religion of the Sea Dyaks is a combination of superstitions, complicated and indefinite. It is based
776 upon the belief in the plurality of deities. The deities, according to their opinion, are not only corporeal, possessing bodies as well as souls, but beget sons and daughters; they are in no way short of humanity. To verify the divinity of their deities, Dyaks affirm that they are able to work miracles, and also that they can metamorphose themselves.

776 The Sea Dyaks call their deities *Petara*, which appellation is no doubt a borrowed one. The ex-
777 planation of Archdeacon Perham shows very clearly that the word *Petara* is none other than the Hindoo *Avatara*, the incarnations of *Vishnu*—the difference of spelling being accounted for by the fact that the Dyaks never sound *v* but use *p* or *b* instead. Again, in an invocation to Pulang Gana occur the names Ini Inda and Rajah Jewata which are similar to Indra
194 and Dewata. It is also a peculiarity of the Dyaks to shorten words and pronounce them according to their taste, especially if they are foreign words.

174 The importation of the word *Petara* into the language helps to corroborate the statement that the Sea Dyaks once lived in the Malayan Peninsula prior to their migration into this island. It also corroborates the fact of the existence of the Majapait rule once upon a time in some parts of the Malayan Peninsula.

776 The principal deities of the Dyaks are Singalang Burong, Pulang Gana, Selampandai, Kling, and Kumang. All these are connected with mythical incidents handed down by traditions relating when they first revealed themselves to the Dyaks as deities.

[p. 5]

12: Haddon & Start E-4 (no date) 1936 OC6 Iban OC6

THE IBAN OR SEA DAYAKS

101 The general appearance and psychical characteristics of the Iban have been well described by Hose and McDougall (I, p: 32, and measurements taken by Haddon are given in II, pp. 339, 340). They are industrious and energetic, and are great wanderers; this latter peculiarity struck the Kayans, who termed them "Ivan" (immigrant or wanderer), and this name has been adopted by large numbers of them in recent years and modified into Iban (II, p. 250). "When the Ibans became associated in piratical matters with the Malays of the coast, these latter assigned to their allies the heads of their enemies, as a sort of perquisite. This state of affairs lasted until well into the nineteenth century; and it is from their association with the Malays of the coast in their piratical expeditions that the Iban became known to Europeans as a Sea Dayak" (Hose, 1926, p. 145). The term Dayak, Dyak, etc., merely designates a non-Malayan inhabitant of Borneo and has no ethnic or tribal significance. It is probably derived from the Malay word *daya*, "inland".

174 The Iban can be distinguished from the other peoples of Borneo by their physical and mental traits and by many differences in culture. There appear to be two main ethnic stocks in Borneo: (1) a narrow-headed type, often termed Indonesian, but, to avoid ambiguity, the term Nesiôt is preferable (Haddon, 1929, pp. 22, 119); (2) a broad-headed type, Proto-Malay (or Oceanic Mongol), which is a branch of the Pareoean or Southern Mongoloid (*l.c.* 1929, p. 32), to which stock the Iban may be assigned (cf. Haddon, 1901). Hose and McDougall (II, p. 248) regard the Iban as belonging to the same "stock from which the true Malays of Sumatra and the Peninsula were differentiated by the influence of Arab culture. A large number of the ancestors of the present Ibans were probably brought to Borneo from Sumatra less than two hundred years ago [Hose, 1926, p. 7, says, "less than three hundred years ago"]. . . . Some two centuries ago, a number of Malay nobles were authorised by the Sultan of Brunei to govern the five rivers of

174 Sarawak proper, namely, the Samarahan, the Sadong, the Batang Lupar, the Saribas, and the Kalka rivers. These Malays were pirate leaders, and they were glad to enrol large numbers of pagan fighting men among their followers... [they] found, no doubt, that their pagan relatives of Sumatra lent themselves more readily to this service than the less warlike Klemantans of Borneo, and therefore, as we suppose, they brought over considerable numbers of them and settled them about the mouths of these rivers". "It seems to us probable that the greater part of the ancestors of the Ibans entered Borneo in this way. But there is reason to think that some of them had settled at an earlier date in this part of Borneo and rather farther southward on the Kapuas River.... In most respects they closely resemble the other Iban tribes, but they are distinguished by some peculiarities of language and accent; their manners are gentler, their bearing less swaggering; they are less given to wandering" (II, p. 249).

We are not in a position to criticize the supposition that some 200 or 300 years ago Malay chiefs introduced Iban warriors from Sumatra to Sarawak, but Hose and McDougall recognize an earlier population of Iban in Borneo. It seems doubtful whether the characteristic Iban culture is so recent as Hose and McDougall seem to imply, and it would be interesting to know from what part of Sumatra "their pagan relatives" came, and if there are any traces there now of such people. We suggest that the Iban migration into Borneo may be regarded as an early wave of the movements that culminated in the Malay Empire.

Hose and McDougall (I, p. 31) state that the Iban "have spread northwards over Sarawak during the latter half of the last century, chiefly from the region of the Batang Lupar, where they are still numerous. They are still spreading northward, encroaching upon the more peaceful Klemantan tribes. They are most densely distributed in the lower reaches of the main 162 rivers of Sarawak, especially the Batang Lupar and Saribas rivers, which are now exclusively occupied by them; but they are found also in scattered communities throughout almost all parts of Sarawak, and even in British North Borneo, and they extend from their centre in Sarawak into the adjacent regions of Dutch Borneo, which are drained by the northern tributaries 101 of the Great Kapuas River". The different tribes or groups of Iban are 619 distinguished by the names of the rivers along which they dwell, thus they

12: Haddon & Start E-4 (no date) 1936 OC6 Iban OC6

X 292
X 531
796
[776]

Of great importance, but very rarely observed in modern times, is the *gawai gajah*, "elephant feast", which can only be held by a particularly successful war leader who has obtained a large number of heads. Offerings and incantations are made to Singalang Burong, who is the God of the

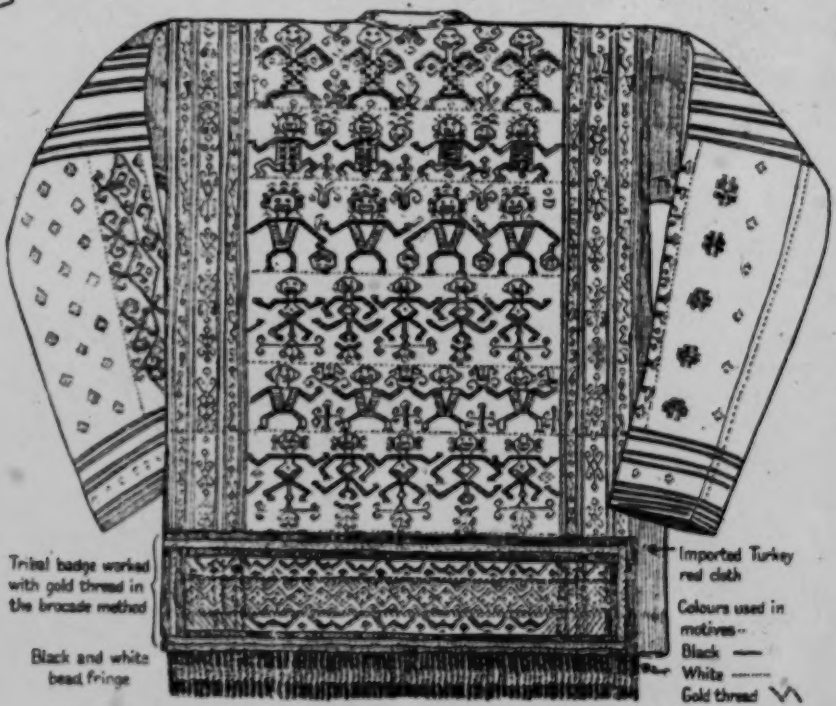

Fig. 21. Back of *manang bali kalambi* 35.904. Red cloth embroidered in black, white and orange, with a badge worked in the brocade method.

292
X 531
174

Heavens and of war. The wooden figure of an elephant is placed on the top of a long pole planted in the ground and to this figure offerings are made (Gomes, 1911, p. 215). It seems probable that the elephant motive is an imperfectly assimilated foreign conception—perhaps of Indian origin. It is, however, possible that it may be reminiscent of a time when their ancestors

12: Haddon & Start E-4 (no date) 1936 OC6 Iban OC6

392 531 X [174]

may have been familiar with elephants. The point requires elucidation by local investigation.

The figures in the second row are also clothed in a chequered garment;

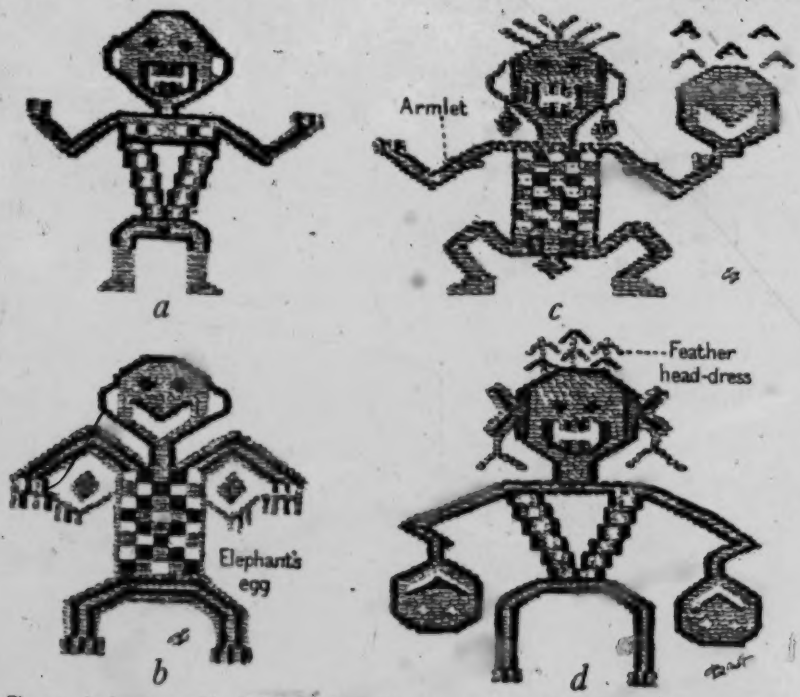

Fig. 22. Anthropomorphic designs on back of *manang bali* jacket 35.904: *a*, inner figure of second row on front of jacket, similar to the figures of rows 5 and 6, and rather similar to those of the fifth row on the back, though these have no teeth; *b*, first row of back, *gajah meram engkaramba* (*anta*), "man's ghost or spirit"; *c*, second row of back, *orang brani*, "brave man"; *d*, third row of back, *engkaramba bekatapu*, man wearing a feathered war-cap and carrying two old human heads, one of which is labelled *minching* (*labu*).

they wear ear-ornaments, perhaps feathers on their heads, and carry heads upright in their left hands (fig. 22, *c*). They are labelled *engkaramba* (*orang brani*), brave men. The possession of trophy heads is doubtless the reason for the adjective *brani*, brave.

seems to be no outside influence in the style of the warp-dyed patterns of the Iban.

The motives chosen, with the exception of the crocodile, do not seem to be used by the other peoples mentioned. A strong argument against Malay influence is the predominance of animal forms, which are forbidden by Islam. The sources of the patterns themselves are all intimately connected with religious beliefs, daily life and environment of the Iban. The animals are those with which the island abounds, the plants drawn are in daily use and indigenous to Borneo, and the remaining subjects are connected with agriculture and other daily pursuits and domestic objects.

We would however refer to the ambiguous *gajah* motive (pp. 41–43), which certainly is not Bornean. It seems to us quite possible that it may be a dim relic of some higher culture that presumably had its origin in India, but we cannot pursue this conjecture further owing to lack of data. The correspondence between the spiritual personages of the Iban and those of Hinduism is discussed by the Venerable Archdeacon J. Perham (cf. Ling Roth, 1, pp. 181, 182).

It is a remarkable fact that the textile designs of the Iban women are quite distinct from the patterns carved by the Iban men on bamboo and wooden objects (see Haddon, 1905), and these are also very different from those carved by the Kayan, Kenyah, Murut and other peoples of Sarawak with whom the Iban come more or less into contact. These peoples do not practise the art of weaving to any extent and they do not make the patterns characteristic of the Iban women.

Taking all these points into consideration it seems reasonable to suggest that the traditional designs used by the Iban women in their textiles have been developed since the Iban became separated from other peoples, and thus the designs would be a native art peculiar to the Iban.

It has previously been stated (pp. 1, 2) that Dr Hose dates the migration to Borneo of the ancestors of the present Iban at less than three centuries ago. We wonder whether this highly developed technique could have reached such perfection within that period of time.

It is interesting to note that in some parts of New Guinea fibre skirts are tied in various places and dyed so as to produce horizontal stripes of a dark colour on the natural colour of the fibres. Loeber (1903, footnote, p. 15)

18:Sitlive E,M-5 (1957-1971) 1973 OC6 Iban OC6
Sibu

(Nolangraaff 1902), the Malays in general did not build inland settlements in other parts of Sarawak. When conditions were sufficiently peaceful, they ventured inland to trade. But when disturbances broke out or head-hunting forays took place, as, for example in the Rejang in the early 1870's, the Malays removed to the coastal regions.

Although some writers[5] have described the Malays as "the original inhabitants of Sibu," there is little support for this, and evidence to the contrary that they entered the area from the west at about the same time as the Ibans invaded from the south. According to Benedict Sandin, whose accounts are largely corroborated by local informants,[6] strong alliances were formed between the Saribas-Skrang Ibans and Malays, to the mutual advantage of both groups. In league with the Malays, Iban warriors found a legitimization for their raiding activities. Booty and captives were shared. The Malays, capitalizing on long-standing factions among the Ibans, and upon the proclivity of certain groups for raiding, enlisted Ibans from different hostile areas as allies in their

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[5] "The original inhabitants of Sibu were Malays and Melanaus. There were no Dayaks" (Dato Tuanku Bujang 1966-5).

[6] Interviews with Tuai Rumah Ampan, Assan; Tuba Aki Polly, Ensong Assan; Changgan Apai Tigong, Sengan.

174 648 own intra-ethnic conflicts. The Iban's value of headhunting among enemies found expression, and the Malay chiefs were able to secure their positions through the followings they built up.

Thus, the invasion of the Rejang area in general, but Sibu in particular, opened new lands not only to the Ibans, but also to the Malays. Seeking to keep their heads, while taking advantage of the riches of the virgin Rejang territory, the Malays entered and built settlements, continued their trade for jungle produce and rice in exchange for salt and fish.[7]

C. The Ibans

175 648 166 Apart from the arrival and establishment of the Brooke Raj, the Iban migrations of the nineteenth century were the most important events of that century. While the migrations doubtlessly would have occurred without the Brookes, the migrations were influenced in a number of respects by Brooke government and were influential in the development of Government policies.

175 166 Because of the lack of historical data, the length of time involved, and the numerous rivers and streams in Sarawak, the migrations tend to be confuging and the factors involved in them complex when dis-

[608] [7] Fraternal relations still exist among Malays and Ibans, and when the latter are asked, Sapa ke udong nuan ("Who is your (ritual or trading)brother?" the answer almost always is, Orang Melayu, "A Malay."